

News Release

Students Study Abroad in Italy

By Rikki Roscoe, communications assistant on Monday, July 6, 2015

Can you imagine traveling the same land that Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Columbus, Benito Mussolini once called their own? Could you find yourself within the Coliseum, feeling like the size of an ant, where roughly 50,000 Romans used to gather to watch malicious gladiatorial combats? How about exploring the same cities that were once ruled by Julius Caesar? Students from the University of Minnesota Crookston recently found themselves in these exact positions, encompassed by the history and beauty of Italy.

Ten students studied abroad in Italy during May, including software engineering graduate Laura Gabrielson from Orr, MN, senior communication student Monika Sweet from Chicago, IL, senior health management student Ndidi Kerr from Nassua, Bahamas, senior equine science student Johnnie Paulie from Wrenshall, MN, sophomore animal science student Rhiannon Nicoll from Rice, MN, senior agronomy and management student Natayle Kobetsky from Grand Forks, ND, sophomore undeclared student Heather Shol from Crookston, MN, sophomore undeclared student Heidi Schol from Crookston, MN, junior English student Marissa Mancillas from San Diego, CA, and senior health science student Lena Park from Hanam, South Korea. Rachel McCoppin, Ph.D., a professor of English at the U of M Crookston within the area of Liberal Arts and Education led the trip.

The group of students explored several locations over a span of eighteen days including Rome, Pompeii, Florence, Venice, Pisa, and Tuscany. A tour guide taught the travelers important information about each sight that they visited.

Senior Monika Sweet, one of the students that went on the trip, expressed that her favorite location was the Tivoli Gardens in Rome, "It was like a scene out of a movie that you'd never think you'd ever see."

Another one of the travelers, junior Marissa Mancillas, explained that her favorite location was Herculaneum, which is an ancient Roman city that was preserved by the same volcanic eruption that had covered Pompeii. "The difference between the two cities is that Herculaneum was covered a few days after the actual eruption with the ash that fell from the sky," says Mansciallas. "Ash and water filled the entire city which helped to support and preserve the infrastructure. Multi-level buildings and some of the original wood continues to survive." The volcanic eruption Mancillas refers to dates back to 79 A.D. when Mt. Vesuvius exploded and covered the region in ash, turning it into a time capsule.

The group also spent time in more secluded areas such as Paestum, which used to be an Etruscan settlement that is currently nestled deep within the Italian countryside. There, they saw three incredibly preserved sanctuaries to Greek divinities and visited museums that showcased archeological findings such as tomb paintings. "What is truly amazing about visiting these types of sites is that you are almost entirely alone and you can walk right up to temples and touch them. It is an experience that changes you." It is the secluded locations that enamor McCoppin. She explains that this is probably because her research interests are in the areas of mythology and nature. In fact, McCoppin will be publishing a book later this year called *The Lessons of Nature in Mythology* which will discuss how nature impacted the mythology of cultures from around the world, including Rome.

The adventure to Italy was the capstone to a 3 credit spring semester course where students were taught about myths, literature, art, architecture, music, and philosophy of Italian culture. The Romans incorporated aspects of many different civilizations into their own empire, and from this they laid the foundation for western civilization.

Study abroad programs are an incredible opportunity and are available to all students at the University of Minnesota. "Traveling abroad changes a person for the better," states McCoppin, who has lead a total of three study abroad trips to Spain, Greece, and now Italy. "It presents challenges that sometimes allow students to leave behind their comfort zones and experience elements of different culture." If you are interested and would like to learn more about these programs, visit [www.umcrookston.edu/learningabroad](http://www.umcrookston.edu/learningabroad).

The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 33 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

In the photos:

Top right photo at the Coliseum, left to right, are Monika Sweet, Laura Gabrielson, Natalye Kobetsky, Ndidi Kerr, Johnnie Pauly, Marissa Mancillas, Rhiannon Nicoll, Lena Park, Heidi Shol, and Rachel McCoppin, Ph.D.

Bottom photo: Students in Cumae, an ancient city on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. The group is standing among the remains of a temple dedicated to the Roman mythological god Jupiter, who is the king of the gods and the god of sky and thunder.

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